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THE DYNAMICS OF TRUST IN DIGITAL ERA COSMETICS: HALAL LABELING, INFORMATION QUALITY, AND ENDORSER CREDIBILITY ON PURCHASE INTENTION

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Abstract

Purpose: This study investigates the intricate drivers of purchase intention in the competitive Indonesian cosmetics market, focusing on Scarlett Whitening products. We examine how halal labeling, perceived information quality, and endorser credibility influence purchase intention, with brand trust acting as a crucial mediating variable.
Design/methodology/approach: Employing a quantitative approach with Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM), data were collected from 115 Scarlett Whitening product users in Kefamenanu City, Indonesia, using purposive sampling. Cross-sectional survey design with self-administered questionnaires was utilized, and data analysis was conducted using SmartPLS 4.0 with 5,000 bootstrap resamples.
Findings: Results reveal that halal labeling ($\beta = 0.334$, $p < 0.001$) and perceived information quality ($\beta = 0.139$, $p < 0.05$) significantly and positively influence purchase intention. Both variables also substantially enhance brand trust (halal labeling: $\beta = 0.473$, $p < 0.001$; information quality: $\beta = 0.197$, $p < 0.05$), which in turn powerfully predicts purchase intention ($\beta = 0.707$, $p < 0.001$). Brand trust significantly mediates the effects of both halal labeling ($\beta_indirect = 0.334$, $p < 0.001$) and information quality ($\beta_indirect = 0.139$, $p = 0.006$) on purchase intention. Conversely, endorser credibility showed no significant impact on either brand trust ($\beta = 0.064$, $p = 0.052$) or purchase intention ($\beta = 0.042$, $p = 0.058$). The model explains substantial variance in brand trust ($R^2 = 0.52$) and purchase intention ($R^2 = 0.74$).
Research limitations/implications: Cross-sectional design limits causal inference; geographic specificity (Kefamenanu City) and single-brand focus (Scarlett Whitening) may limit generalizability. Future research should employ longitudinal designs, multi-city sampling, and examine multiple product categories and endorser types to establish temporal precedence and boundary conditions.
Practical implications: Resources should be prioritized toward securing halal certifications and fostering positive online review ecosystems rather than over-investing in celebrity endorsements that may no longer yield significant returns in Muslim-majority emerging markets. Brands should reallocate marketing budgets from expensive celebrity contracts to trust-building initiatives.

Originality/value: This study demonstrates the primacy of intrinsic trust signals (halal certification and user-generated content) over celebrity marketing in Muslim-majority emerging markets, clarifying mediation mechanisms through which marketing signals operate and identifying boundary conditions for source credibility theory in digital-era consumer contexts.

RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS

- Brand trust is the strongest predictor of purchase intention ($\beta = 0.707$, $p < 0.001$), explaining 74% variance
- Halal labeling influences purchase through dual pathways: direct effect ($\beta = 0.334$) and trust mediation (50%)
- Celebrity endorsement shows zero effect on brand trust or purchase intention (all $p > 0.05$)
- Information quality significantly enhances trust ($\beta = 0.197$) and purchase intention in digital markets
- First study quantifying trust mediation mechanisms in Indonesian cosmetics Muslim-majority context.

Keywords: Brand Trust; Halal Labelling; Purchase Intention; Information Quality; Endorser Credibility

JEL Classification: M31; M37; L66; Z12

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Establish Significance

The global beauty industry has experienced monumental transformation driven by digital technology, fundamentally altering how companies engage with consumers and how consumers make purchase decisions (Kotler & Keller, 2016). In emerging markets like Indonesia the world's largest Muslim-majority nation with over 270 million people this transformation is particularly pronounced, with fierce competition among local and international cosmetics brands (Kotler & Keller, 2016). The Indonesian beauty and personal care market is projected to continue its robust growth, supported by rising disposable incomes, increasing beauty consciousness, and expanding digital commerce penetration. The rise of social media platforms particularly Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube and e-commerce ecosystems has democratized access to beauty products, making skincare a primary necessity for a growing segment of the population, especially women who seek to enhance self-confidence and aesthetic value (Danendra & Tantra, 2023).

This digital wave, however, presents a paradox for marketers and consumers alike. While brands heavily invest in high-profile marketing campaigns, including celebrity endorsements often costing millions of dollars annually, consumers are increasingly seeking authentic and trustworthy information to navigate a saturated market rife with counterfeit products, misleading claims, and potential health risks from non-certified cosmetics (Puspitasari & Harsoyo, 2023). Reports from Indonesian regulatory and academic sources highlight the

ongoing discovery of illegal cosmetic products containing hazardous substances such as mercury and hydroquinone, reinforcing consumer anxiety about product safety. In this environment, consumer purchase intention the deliberate plan or conscious decision to acquire a specific product is no longer a simple response to attractive advertising or celebrity appeal; instead, it represents a complex decision-making process fundamentally rooted in trust (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975; Kotler & Keller, 2016).

Brand trust, defined as a consumer's confident expectation that a brand is reliable and will act in the consumer's best interest, has emerged as a cornerstone of loyalty and purchasing decisions in digitally mediated markets (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001; Delgado-Ballester, 2004). In Muslim-majority nations like Indonesia, trust is intrinsically linked to religious compliance, making halal certification a powerful signal of product safety, purity, and ethical production (Nurhayati & Hendar, 2020; Ramadan & Syaefulloh, 2023). A halal label, certified by authorities such as the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI), assures consumers that a product is free from prohibited ingredients and manufactured according to Islamic principles, transforming halal labeling from a voluntary religious attribute into a legal requirement and fundamental market expectation under Indonesia's Halal Product Assurance Law (Ramadan & Syaefulloh, 2023; Ulyanita & Mubarok, 2023).

Furthermore, the quality of information perceived by consumers primarily through online reviews, user-generated content, influencer testimonials, and detailed product descriptions significantly shapes brand trust and subsequent purchase intentions (Zhao et al., 2017; Rahmawati & Untarini, 2023). Research on digital-era consumers shows that Millennials and Generation Z increasingly prioritize peer recommendations and authentic user experiences over traditional top–down advertising, especially in cosmetics and skincare categories where perceived risk and identity expression are high (Danendra & Tantra, 2023; Zahirah et al., 2024). This shift contrasts sharply with traditional marketing strategies that rely heavily on endorser credibility the perceived expertise, trustworthiness, and attractiveness of celebrities or influencers promoting products raising questions about whether expensive celebrity-based campaigns still yield proportional returns in trust-driven markets (Ohanian, 1990; Shimp, 2014; Suryadi, 2021).

1.2. Research Problem and Gap

Extant literature has documented the roles of halal labeling, information quality, and endorser credibility in shaping consumer responses across various product categories, including cosmetics (Nurhayati & Hendar, 2020; Ginting & Khoiri, 2023; Danendra & Tantra, 2023). Studies in Islamic marketing consistently show that halal certification enhances purchase intention and brand evaluations among Muslim consumers, primarily by reducing perceived risk and signaling compliance with religious norms (Nurhayati & Hendar, 2020; Ramadan & Syaefulloh, 2023; Ulyanita & Mubarok, 2023). Parallel research in e-commerce and digital marketing indicates that high-quality online information and user-generated content increase decision confidence and purchase intention by improving transparency and perceived diagnosticity of product claims (Zhao et al., 2017; Rahmawati & Untarini, 2023; Zahirah et al., 2024). In addition, research on social media influencers demonstrates that credibility attributes attractiveness, expertise, and trustworthiness can positively affect brand image and

purchase intention, particularly among Gen Z cosmetic users (Danendra & Tantra, 2023; Suryadi, 2021).

Despite these advances, several important gaps remain. First, much of the existing work examines halal labeling, information quality, and endorser credibility in isolation, rather than within an integrated model that tests their simultaneous effects on purchase intention and their relative importance as competing trust signals in the same decision context (Suryadi, 2021; Ginting & Khoiri, 2023). This fragmentation limits theoretical insight into how different types of marketing signals jointly shape consumer behavior in digital markets. Second, while prior studies show that halal labels and information quality influence trust and purchase-related outcomes, the specific mediating role of brand trust has often been treated implicitly or only partially tested, leaving the underlying psychological mechanisms linking these signals to behavioral intentions underexplored (Delgado-Ballester, 2004; Ramadan & Syaefulloh, 2023; Zahirah et al., 2024). Third, evidence regarding the effectiveness of celebrity and influencer endorsements in the cosmetics domain has become increasingly inconsistent: some studies report significant positive effects on Gen Z purchase intention, while others highlight endorsement fatigue and rising consumer skepticism toward highly commercialized promotions (Danendra & Tantra, 2023; Puspitasari & Harsoyo, 2023).

A further gap concerns context. Many influential studies on influencer credibility, social media marketing, and digital information quality have been conducted in broader national samples or in major metropolitan settings, without focusing on mid-sized urban centers where digital penetration coexists with strong local retail and community networks (Rahmawati & Untarini, 2023; Zahirah et al., 2024). In such settings, peer word-of-mouth, local norms, and halal compliance may interact differently with digital signals than in large, highly urbanized markets. Consequently, the boundary conditions under which intrinsic trust signals (e.g., halal certification, user-generated reviews) outperform extrinsic signals (e.g., celebrity endorsements) in driving purchase intention for cosmetics in Indonesian Muslim-majority contexts remain insufficiently specified (Nurhayati & Hendar, 2020; Ulyanita & Mubarok, 2023). These gaps constrain both theoretical development in trust-based consumer behavior and managerial ability to allocate marketing resources efficiently between certification, information management, and endorsement strategies (Delgado-Ballester, 2004; Kotler & Keller, 2016).

1.3. Study Overview and Contributions

This study addresses these gaps by examining how brand trust mediates the effects of three key marketing signals halal labeling, perceived information quality, and endorser credibility on purchase intention for Scarlett Whitening cosmetics in an Indonesian Muslim-majority context. Drawing on social cognitive theory, source credibility theory, information processing theory, and brand trust literature, we conceptualize halal certification and information quality as intrinsic trust signals and celebrity endorsement as an extrinsic signal that may be weakening in effectiveness in digital-era markets.

Methodologically, we employ a quantitative, cross-sectional survey of 115 Scarlett Whitening users in Kefamenanu City and analyze the data using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) with bootstrapping to estimate direct, indirect, and

mediation effects among the focal constructs. The model tests the direct paths from halal labeling, perceived information quality, and endorser credibility to purchase intention; their effects on brand trust; and the mediating role of brand trust in translating these signals into behavioral intention.

Theoretically, this study contributes by (1) clarifying the central role of brand trust as a psychological mechanism linking multiple marketing signals to purchase intention in credence-intensive cosmetic products, (2) integrating halal certification, digital information quality, and endorser credibility into a single structural model that reveals their relative strengths and pathways, and (3) identifying boundary conditions for source credibility theory in Muslim-majority, digitally mediated markets where consumers are increasingly skeptical of overt celebrity promotion. Practically, the findings provide evidence-based guidance for managers on how to re-balance marketing investments away from costly celebrity contracts and toward strengthening halal certification visibility and high-quality, authentic online information ecosystems, thereby aligning resource allocation with the trust drivers that most effectively enhance purchase intention in the Indonesian cosmetics market.

2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND AND HYPOTHESES

2.1. Theoretical Framework

This study integrates insights from social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1997), source credibility theory (Hovland et al., 1953), information processing theory (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986), and brand trust literature (Delgado-Ballester, 2004) to examine how marketing signals influence consumer purchase intention through the mediating mechanism of brand trust.

Social cognitive theory posits that human behavior results from reciprocal interactions among cognitive factors, behavioral patterns, and environmental influences. In consumer contexts, marketing signals halal labels, information quality, celebrity endorsements represent environmental stimuli that shape consumers' cognitive evaluations and confidence beliefs regarding product choices.

Source credibility theory suggests that message effectiveness depends on the perceived expertise and trustworthiness of information sources, with credible sources enhancing message persuasiveness. Information processing theory distinguishes between central route processing (systematic evaluation of product information) and peripheral route processing (reliance on heuristic cues like celebrity attractiveness). In the contemporary digital environment characterized by information abundance and limited attention, consumers increasingly rely on cognitive shortcuts trusted signals that simplify decision-making and reduce perceived risk.

Brand trust operates as the critical cognitive intermediary in this process a psychological representation that integrates and simplifies complex product information, reduces uncertainty, and facilitates purchase decision-making. Trust develops through consistent positive experiences, transparent communication, and alignment between brand promises and delivered performance (Delgado-Ballester, 2004). In Muslim consumer contexts, trust is additionally shaped by religious compliance signals, with halal certification serving as a fundamental trust anchor. The conceptual model proposes that halal labeling, perceived

information quality, and endorser credibility influence purchase intention both directly and indirectly through brand trust as a mediating mechanism.

2.1.1. Purchase Intention

Human Purchase intention represents the subjective probability that a consumer will purchase a specific product or brand, reflecting the strength of motivation and conscious planning toward acquiring the product (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). As a critical component of consumer behavior, purchase intention constitutes the cognitive and affective stage immediately preceding actual purchase behavior. Kotler and Keller (2016) define purchase intention as a consumer's plan to buy a particular brand based on available information about the product, brand attributes, and purchase context. Ferdinand (2014) characterizes purchase intention as a consumer's deliberate response to external marketing stimuli product information from advertisements, promotions, recommendations, and brand communications that creates motivation toward acquisition.

Purchase intention encompasses multiple dimensions identified by Kotler (2010): (1) transactional interest the likelihood of purchasing the product; (2) referential interest willingness to recommend the product to others; (3) preferential interest prioritization of the brand relative to competing alternatives; and (4) explorative interest information-seeking behavior and active engagement with product-related content. Schiffman and Kanuk (2017) emphasize that purchase intention is formed through a cognitive evaluation process in which consumers assess a product's ability to satisfy personal needs, align with self-concept, and deliver anticipated benefits relative to costs and risks.

In the cosmetics industry specifically, purchase intention is influenced by multiple factors including product efficacy perceptions, safety concerns, brand reputation, social influence, and religious compliance (Nurhayati & Hendar, 2020). Given the intimate nature of cosmetic products applied directly to skin and the potential health risks from unsafe ingredients, trust becomes particularly salient in shaping purchase intentions for beauty products.

2.1.2. Brand Trust

Brand trust is defined as the confident expectation that a brand is reliable and will consistently act in the consumer's best interest, even when consumers are vulnerable or dependent on the brand's performance (Delgado-Ballester, 2004; Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001). Trust represents a psychological state comprising both cognitive and affective components: cognitive trust reflects rational beliefs about the brand's competence, reliability, and integrity, while affective trust encompasses emotional confidence and positive feelings toward the brand.

Delgado-Ballester's (2004) brand trust model identifies two fundamental dimensions: (1) brand reliability the technical or competence-based dimension reflecting consumer confidence that the brand will perform its stated function and deliver promised benefits consistently; and (2) brand intentions the attributional dimension reflecting consumer confidence that the brand genuinely cares about consumer welfare and will act responsibly when problems arise. Trust develops incrementally through repeated satisfactory interactions,

transparent communication, consistent quality delivery, and demonstrated concern for consumer interests.

In consumer behavior literature, brand trust operates as a critical antecedent to loyalty, positive word-of-mouth, purchase intention, and willingness to pay premium prices (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001). Trust is particularly important in contexts characterized by information asymmetry, where consumers cannot fully evaluate product quality before purchase (credence goods), or where product failure carries significant consequences (health, safety, religious compliance). For cosmetic products which combine credence attributes (ingredient safety, long-term skin effects) with experiential attributes (sensory qualities, short-term results) trust serves as the primary mechanism through which consumers manage uncertainty and make confident purchase decisions.

In Muslim consumer contexts, brand trust is fundamentally shaped by halal compliance. Research by Ramadan and Syaefulloh (2023) demonstrates that halal certification substantially enhances brand trust among Muslim consumers by signaling adherence to religious principles, ingredient purity, and ethical manufacturing processes. Similarly, Ulyanita and Mubarok (2023) document that brand trust mediates the relationship between halal labeling and purchase decisions for food and personal care products.

2.1.3. Halal Labeling

Halal, an Arabic term meaning "permissible" or "lawful," refers to products and practices that comply with Islamic Shariah law. Halal labeling serves as a formal certification mechanism, communicating that a product adheres to Islamic principles regarding ingredients, manufacturing processes, and supply chain management. For cosmetic products, halal certification ensures the absence of prohibited substances (haram ingredients such as pork derivatives, alcohol above specified thresholds, human-derived materials, or animal ingredients from non-halal slaughtered sources) and verifies that manufacturing facilities maintain separation from haram product lines (Nurhayati & Hendar, 2020).

In Indonesia, halal certification is issued by the Indonesian Ulama Council (MUI) through its Halal Product Assurance Agency (BPJPH), following rigorous inspection of ingredients, production processes, and quality control systems. Since the implementation of Law No. 33/2014 on Halal Product Assurance, halal certification has become mandatory for products distributed in Indonesia, transforming halal labeling from a voluntary religious consideration to a legal requirement and baseline market expectation.

From a consumer behavior perspective, halal labeling operates as a powerful heuristic cue a cognitive shortcut that simplifies decision-making and reduces perceived risk (Nurhayati & Hendar, 2020). The halal label addresses multiple consumer concerns simultaneously: religious compliance (fulfilling religious obligations), safety (assurance of ingredient purity and absence of harmful substances), quality (signal of rigorous certification standards), and ethics (verification of ethical sourcing and production). Research consistently demonstrates strong positive relationships between halal labeling and purchase intention among Muslim consumers, as the label directly reduces uncertainty regarding product integrity and religious permissibility (Ginting & Khoiri, 2023; Puspitasari & Harsoyo, 2023).

Furthermore, halal certification substantially enhances brand trust by signaling brand commitment to consumer welfare, transparency, and adherence to ethical standards beyond legal minimums. The certification process itself involving third-party verification, periodic audits, and public disclosure communicates brand reliability and accountability, fostering cognitive and affective trust (Ramadan & Syaefulloh, 2023).

2.1.4. Perceived Information Quality

In digital commerce environments, perceived information quality refers to a consumer's subjective assessment of the accuracy, relevance, timeliness, completeness, and credibility of product information available through online channels particularly user reviews, detailed product descriptions, influencer content, and brand communications (Zhao et al., 2017). High-quality information exhibits several characteristics: (1) accuracy freedom from errors and alignment with actual product attributes; (2) completeness comprehensive coverage of relevant product features, benefits, and potential limitations; (3) relevance addressing consumer questions and decision-making needs; (4) timeliness current and up-to-date information; and (5) credibility originating from trustworthy, unbiased sources.

Information quality has become increasingly salient in consumer decision-making due to the proliferation of digital channels, the democratization of content creation through social media, and consumers' ability to access peer experiences before purchase. Research demonstrates that high-quality information empowers consumers, reduces perceived risk, increases decision confidence, and ultimately strengthens purchase intention (Rahmawati & Untarini, 2023; Zahirah et al., 2024). When potential buyers encounter positive, detailed, and credible reviews from other users, their confidence in the product increases, which in turn strengthens their willingness to purchase.

From an information processing perspective, high-quality information facilitates central route processing systematic, thoughtful evaluation of product merits leading to more confident and stable attitudes toward brands (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986). Conversely, low-quality or absent information forces consumers to rely on peripheral cues (brand name, price, celebrity endorsement), resulting in less confident attitudes more susceptible to competitive influence.

Perceived information quality also substantially influences brand trust. When brands provide transparent, comprehensive, and accurate information, and when independent user reviews corroborate brand claims, consumers develop confidence in the brand's reliability and intentions (Ghaisani & Purbawati, 2020). Conversely, incomplete information, inconsistencies between brand claims and user experiences, or suppression of negative reviews erodes trust and increases skepticism. In the cosmetics industry specifically, where consumers seek detailed information about ingredients, efficacy, potential side effects, and suitability for different skin types, information quality is particularly critical for building trust and enabling confident purchase decisions.

2.1.5. Endorser Credibility

The Source Credibility Model, developed by Hovland, Janis, and Kelley (1953) and refined by subsequent researchers, posits that message effectiveness depends substantially on the perceived credibility of the information source. Endorser credibility refers to the positive

characteristics of a celebrity, influencer, or expert that make their promotional claims believable and persuasive to target audiences (Shimp, 2014). Ohanian's (1990) widely cited model identifies three dimensions of source credibility: (1) expertise the perceived knowledge, experience, and competence of the endorser regarding the product category; (2) trustworthiness the perceived honesty, integrity, and sincerity of the endorser; and (3) attractiveness the physical appeal, likability, and similarity of the endorser to the target audience.

According to source credibility theory, highly credible endorsers enhance advertisement effectiveness and brand attitudes through multiple mechanisms: they attract attention to messages, increase message comprehension and retention, enhance persuasiveness of arguments, and transfer their positive image to the endorsed brand (source-brand transfer effect). Endorsers perceived as expert and trustworthy enhance central route processing by serving as informational cues about product quality, while attractive endorsers facilitate peripheral route processing by creating positive affective associations (Shimp, 2014).

In the Indonesian cosmetics market, celebrity and influencer endorsements represent substantial marketing investments, with brands routinely engaging popular actresses, musicians, and social media influencers to promote products through traditional advertising, sponsored social media posts, and event appearances. The logic underlying these investments is straightforward: credible endorsers should enhance brand trust by transferring their positive reputations to brands, and should strengthen purchase intention by making promotional messages more persuasive.

However, emerging research suggests that endorser effectiveness may be diminishing in contemporary markets due to several factors: (1) endorsement saturation consumers are exposed to so many celebrity endorsements that individual campaigns lose distinctiveness and credibility; (2) perceived commercialization consumers increasingly recognize endorsements as paid transactions rather than authentic recommendations, reducing perceived trustworthiness; (3) endorser-product mismatch when endorsers lack genuine expertise or connection to product categories (e.g., actors endorsing scientific skincare), their credibility diminishes; and (4) peer review preference consumers may trust fellow users' experiences more than celebrity testimonials (Danendra & Tantra, 2023).

2.2. Hypothesis Development

2.3.1. Direct Effects on Purchase Intention

Halal labeling influences purchase intention through multiple pathways. For Muslim consumers, purchasing halal-certified products fulfills religious obligations, creating intrinsic motivation toward acquisition. Beyond religious compliance, halal certification signals product safety, quality, and ethical production, addressing consumer concerns about potentially harmful ingredients in cosmetics. The certification process involving third-party verification and periodic audits provides assurance that reduces perceived risk and increases willingness to purchase. Empirical evidence consistently demonstrates strong positive effects of halal labeling on purchase intention across multiple product categories, including

cosmetics (Nurhayati & Hendar, 2020; Ginting & Khoiri, 2023; Puspitasari & Harsoyo, 2023).

H1: Halal Labeling has a significant positive effect on Purchase Intention.

Perceived information quality influences purchase intention by reducing uncertainty, increasing decision confidence, and enabling systematic product evaluation. High-quality information particularly positive, detailed, and credible user reviews provides vicarious product experience, reduces perceived risk, and strengthens confidence in purchase decisions. Information processing theory suggests that high-quality information facilitates central route processing, leading to stronger and more stable attitudes toward brands. Empirical research confirms that perceived information quality significantly predicts purchase intention across multiple product contexts, including cosmetics and digital commerce (Rahmawati & Untarini, 2023; Zahirah et al., 2024).

H2: Perceived Information Quality has a significant positive effect on Purchase Intention.

Endorser credibility influences purchase intention according to source credibility theory through message persuasiveness and source-brand transfer effects. Credible endorsers perceived as expert, trustworthy, and attractive enhance advertisement effectiveness, create positive brand associations, and increase willingness to purchase. While traditional research documents positive effects of endorser credibility on purchase intention (Shimp, 2014), recent evidence suggests these effects may be weakening due to endorsement saturation and consumer skepticism. Nevertheless, based on established theory, we propose:

H3: Endorser Credibility has a significant positive effect on Purchase Intention.

2.3.2. Effects on Brand Trust

Halal certification substantially enhances brand trust by signaling multiple dimensions of brand reliability and positive intentions. First, the certification process itself involving rigorous third-party inspection, ingredient verification, and periodic audits demonstrates brand commitment to transparency and accountability, enhancing cognitive trust. Second, halal certification signals that brands prioritize consumer welfare (religious compliance, safety) beyond profit maximization, enhancing affective trust and perceived brand intentions. Third, the public visibility of certification and association with reputable certifying bodies (MUI) transfers institutional credibility to brands. Research confirms that halal labeling significantly enhances brand trust among Muslim consumers (Ramadan & Syaefulloh, 2023; Ulyanita & Mubarok, 2023).

H4: Halal Labeling has a significant positive effect on Brand Trust.

Perceived information quality influences brand trust through transparency and consistency mechanisms. When brands provide comprehensive, accurate, and transparent information, they signal honesty and reliability, enhancing cognitive trust. When independent user reviews corroborate brand claims, consistency between promises and actual performance is demonstrated, strengthening trust. Conversely, information gaps, inconsistencies, or contradictions between brand communications and user experiences erode trust. Research demonstrates that information quality particularly from e-commerce platforms, user reviews, and brand websites significantly predicts brand trust (Ghaisani & Purbawati, 2020; Zahirah et al., 2024).

H5: Perceived Information Quality has a significant positive effect on Brand Trust.
Endorser credibility influences brand trust through credibility transfer mechanisms. When consumers perceive endorsers as expert and trustworthy, they infer that endorsed brands must also be reliable and of high quality, as credible endorsers would not risk their reputations by promoting inferior products. This credibility transfer enhances cognitive trust in brand competence. Additionally, consumers may develop affective trust through identification with likable, attractive endorsers. Traditional source credibility research suggests positive effects of endorser credibility on brand trust. However, if consumers perceive endorsements as purely commercial transactions rather than authentic recommendations, credibility transfer may not occur.
H6: Endorser Credibility has a significant positive effect on Brand Trust.

2.3.3. Direct Effect of Brand Trust on Purchase Intention

Brand trust represents perhaps the most direct and powerful predictor of purchase intention in consumer behavior literature. Consumers with strong trust in a brand exhibit higher purchase likelihood due to multiple psychological mechanisms: (1) reduced perceived risk trust diminishes concerns about product failure or negative consequences; (2) increased confidence trust provides assurance that brands will deliver promised benefits; (3) simplified decision-making trust serves as a heuristic shortcut, reducing the need for extensive information search and evaluation; (4) positive affect trust generates positive emotional associations that motivate approach behavior; and (5) commitment trust fosters psychological attachment and loyalty (Delgado-Ballester, 2004; Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001).
Empirical research consistently documents strong positive effects of brand trust on purchase intention across diverse product categories and market contexts. In the Indonesian cosmetics market specifically, Ellitan et al. (2022) and Hadi and Keni (2022) demonstrate that brand trust significantly predicts purchase intention. Given trust's fundamental role as the psychological foundation for purchase commitment, we propose:
H7: Brand Trust has a significant positive effect on Purchase Intention.

2.3.4. Mediation Hypotheses

Social cognitive theory, information processing theory, and brand trust literature collectively suggest that marketing signals halal labels, information quality, endorser credibility influence purchase intention not only directly but substantially through psychological mechanisms, specifically through shaping brand trust. The mediation logic proceeds as follows: consumers process marketing signals (environmental stimuli) to form overall brand evaluations and trust perceptions (cognitive-affective states); these trust perceptions then serve as psychological guides for behavioral intentions and decisions.
For halal labeling, the certification communicates brand reliability, safety, and ethical compliance, building cognitive and affective trust. This accumulated trust then motivates purchase intention by reducing perceived risk and increasing confidence. Direct effects of halal labeling on purchase intention may also occur through religious obligation fulfillment, but the indirect pathway through trust should be substantial, as trust represents the psychological mechanism through which safety and quality signals influence behavior.

Research by Ulyanita and Mubarok (2023) demonstrates that brand trust mediates the relationship between halal labeling and purchase decisions for personal care products.

H8: Brand Trust mediates the relationship between Halal Labeling and Purchase Intention.

Similarly, perceived information quality builds trust by demonstrating brand transparency and consistency between promises and performance. Trust, in turn, motivates purchase intention. While high-quality information may also directly influence purchase intention by reducing uncertainty, the trust-building pathway represents a critical mechanism. Research by Ghaisani and Purbawati (2020) and Zahirah et al. (2024) documents that trust mediates relationships between information quality and purchase-related outcomes.

H9: Brand Trust mediates the relationship between Perceived Information Quality and Purchase Intention.

For endorser credibility, credible endorsers should enhance brand trust through credibility transfer, and trust should then drive purchase intention. While endorsers may also directly influence purchase intention through persuasive appeals, the trust-building pathway represents an important mechanism according to source credibility theory. However, if modern consumers are skeptical of celebrity endorsements, the credibility transfer and mediation pathways may not operate as traditional theory predicts.

H10: Brand Trust mediates the relationship between Endorser Credibility and Purchase Intention.

2.3. Conceptual Model

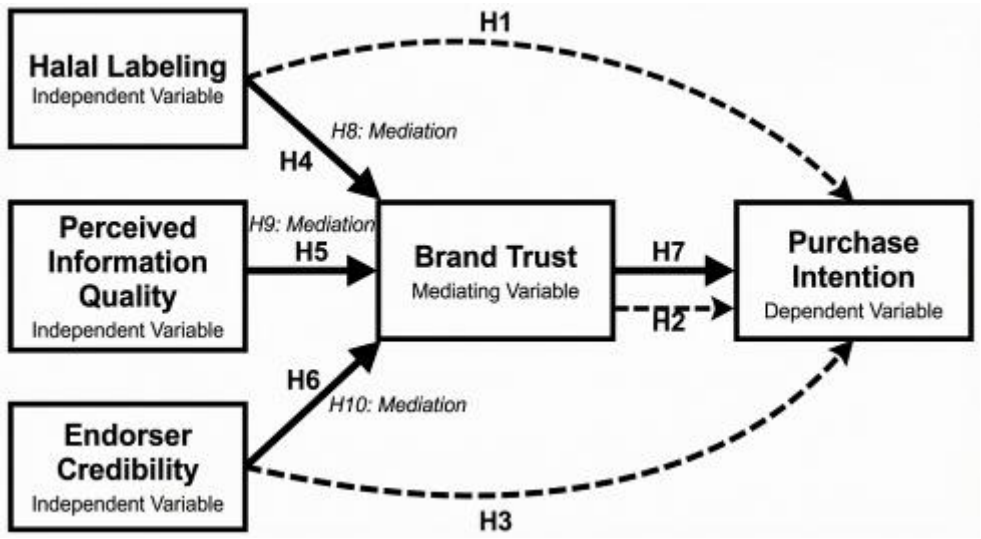

Figure 1. Theoretical Model Showing Brand Trust as Mediator between Marketing Variables and Purchase Intention

Note. Conceptual model depicting brand trust as a mediator between marketing variables (halal labeling, perceived information quality, endorser credibility) and purchase intention. Solid arrows = indirect effects through brand trust; dashed arrows = direct effects.

3. METHOD

3.1. Research Design and Context

This research employed a quantitative, cross-sectional survey design to examine associations among halal labeling, perceived information quality, endorser credibility, brand trust, and purchase intention among Scarlett Whitening cosmetic users. Cross-sectional designs are appropriate for testing theory-driven hypotheses regarding variable relationships and align with established practices in consumer behavior research (Spector, 2019). Data collection occurred at a single time point from multiple respondents to maximize heterogeneity within the target population.

The study was conducted in Kefamenanu City, the capital of North Central Timor Regency in East Nusa Tenggara Province, Indonesia. Kefamenanu represents a mid-sized urban center (population approximately 55,000) with growing middle-class consumer segments, increasing digital commerce penetration, and diverse retail channels including traditional shops, modern minimarkets, and active e-commerce usage. The city provides a representative context for examining cosmetics purchase behavior among Indonesian consumers outside major metropolitan areas.

3.2. Sample and Procedure

Study participants were consumers of Scarlett Whitening cosmetic products residing in Kefamenanu City, East Nusa Tenggara. Scarlett Whitening, produced by PT Felancy Indonesia, has experienced rapid market growth since its launch in 2017, supported by aggressive digital marketing, celebrity endorsements (notably Prilly Latuconsina), competitive pricing, and halal certification from MUI. The brand's product portfolio includes facial wash, serums, toners, body lotions, and sheet masks, with marketing primarily targeting young female consumers aged 18–35.

A purposive (judgment) sampling strategy was employed to reach respondents who fit the target profile. Participants were recruited through direct approaches at cosmetics retail outlets in Kefamenanu, online invitations distributed via local beauty and skincare groups on Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp, and snowball referrals from initial respondents, ensuring coverage of both offline and online shoppers. Inclusion criteria required respondents to be female, at least 18 years old, residents of Kefamenanu, and to have purchased or used Scarlett Whitening products at least once in the preceding six months, with willingness to provide informed consent. Individuals who had never used Scarlett products, male consumers, temporary residents or visitors, and those unable to complete the Indonesian-language questionnaire were excluded.

The required sample size was determined using guidelines for Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). Following Ferdinand's (2014) recommendation of 5–10 respondents per indicator and considering 23 indicators across five constructs, the minimum target was set at 115 respondents, which is also consistent with Hair et al.'s (2019) recommendation of at least 100 observations for models with multiple constructs and moderate effect sizes. Data were collected using online and paper-based self-administered questionnaires distributed to 145 potential respondents between 15 September and 31 October 2025. After excluding incomplete questionnaires, male respondents inadvertently recruited, and cases failing attention checks, as well as removing multivariate outliers

identified via Mahalanobis distance, the final analytical sample comprised 115 respondents, yielding a usable response rate of 79.3%. All respondents completed the questionnaire in approximately 10–15 minutes, after reading an introduction that explained the study purpose, guaranteed confidentiality, clarified the voluntary nature of participation, and obtained written informed consent. Ethical clearance was granted by the Universitas Timor Research Ethics Committee.

As summarized in Table 1, the final sample was entirely female, with a mean age of 24.8 years (SD = 5.6; range 18–42 years). Most respondents (68.7%) were aged 18–25, aligning with Scarlett's core market of young adult women. Educational attainment was relatively high: 52.2% were currently enrolled in or had completed a bachelor's degree and 31.3% had completed high school. The majority (60.9%) reported a monthly personal spending budget between IDR 1–3 million, and most were students or early-career professionals. Product engagement was substantial, with 73.9% purchasing Scarlett products at least once per month and an average usage duration of 18.6 months (SD = 12.4). The most frequently used items were facial wash (89.6%), brightening serum (67.8%), and acne serum (54.8%), indicating that respondents were active users of the brand's core skincare lines.

Table 1. *Demographic and Usage Characteristics of the Analytical Sample (N = 115)*

Characteristic	Category	n	%	M (SD)
Age	18-25 years	79	68.7	24.8 (5.6)
	26-30 years	22	19.1	—
	31-35 years	9	7.8	—
	36+ years	5	4.3	—
Education	Junior/Senior High School	36	31.3	—
	Diploma	19	16.5	—
	Bachelor's	56	48.7	—
	Master's	4	3.5	—
Occupation	Student	54	47.0	—
	Private Employee	32	27.8	—
	Civil Servant	8	7.0	—
	Entrepreneur	15	13.0	—
	Other	6	5.2	—
Monthly Spending Budget (IDR)	<IDR 1 million	28	24.3	—
	1-3 million	70	60.9	—
	3-5 million	13	11.3	—
	>5 million	4	3.5	—
Purchase Frequency	First-time user	8	7.0	—
	Rarely (>3 months)	22	19.1	—
	Monthly	57	49.6	—
	2-3 times/month	24	20.9	—
	Weekly	4	3.5	—
Usage Duration	<6 months	26	22.6	18.6 (12.4)
	6-12 months	31	27.0	—
	1-2 years	35	30.4	—

Characteristic	Category	n	%	M (SD)
	>2 years	23	20.0	—
Primary Products Used (Multiple response)	Facial Wash	103	89.6	—
	Brightening Serum	78	67.8	—
	Acne Serum	63	54.8	—
	Body Lotion	48	41.7	—
	Toner	42	36.5	—

Note. Sample drawn from Kefamenanu City, East Nusa Tenggara Province. Data collected September-October 2025.

3.3. Measures

All constructs were measured using established, validated scales adapted to the Indonesian context and Scarlett Whitening brand through forward-backward translation procedures (Brislin, 1970). To avoid neutral midpoint bias and encourage definitive responses, a 4-point Likert-type scale was employed throughout (1 = Strongly Disagree; 2 = Disagree; 3 = Agree; 4 = Strongly Agree). This approach aligns with recommendations for Likert scales in cross-cultural research (Weijters, Cabooter, & Schillewaert, 2010).

3.3.1. Halal Labeling (5 items)

Measured using an adapted scale assessing consumer awareness of, understanding of, and perceived importance of halal certification for Scarlett products. Sample items: "I am aware that Scarlett Whitening products have halal certification from MUI" and "Halal certification from MUI is an important consideration in my decision to purchase Scarlett products." The scale has demonstrated reliability in prior research ($\alpha = 0.86$; Ginting & Khoiri, 2023).

3.3.2. Perceived Information Quality (4 items)

Measured using an adapted information quality scale assessing consumer perceptions of the accuracy, completeness, relevance, and credibility of information about Scarlett products available through online reviews, social media, and product descriptions. Sample items: "Online reviews about Scarlett products provide accurate and honest information" and "I can find complete information about Scarlett product ingredients and benefits through online sources." Previous research reported $\alpha = 0.84$ (Zhao et al., 2017; Rahmawati & Untarini, 2023).

3.3.3. Endorser Credibility (5 items)

Measured using Ohanian's (1990) source credibility scale adapted to Scarlett's celebrity endorser (Prilly Latuconsina). The scale assesses perceived expertise, trustworthiness, and attractiveness. Sample items: "Scarlett's celebrity endorser (Prilly Latuconsina) has expertise in beauty and skincare" and "I trust the celebrity endorser's recommendations about Scarlett products." Reported reliability: $\alpha = 0.88$ (Shimp, 2014; Suryadi, 2021).

3.3.4. Brand Trust (5 items)

Measured using Delgado-Ballester's (2004) brand trust scale assessing both reliability (competence-based trust) and intentions (attributional trust) dimensions. Sample items: "I trust that Scarlett products will deliver the results they promise" and "I believe Scarlett as a brand cares about consumer safety and satisfaction." Scale reliability: $\alpha = 0.91$ (Delgado-Ballester, 2004; Ellitan et al., 2022).

3.3.5. Purchase Intention (4 items)

Measured using Kotler and Keller's (2016) purchase intention scale assessing likelihood of future purchase, recommendation intention, and preference relative to competitors. Sample items: "I intend to continue purchasing Scarlett products in the future" and "I will recommend Scarlett products to family and friends." Scale reliability: $\alpha = 0.89$ (Kotler & Keller, 2016).

3.4. Data Screening and Preliminary Analyses

Prior to hypothesis testing, comprehensive data screening was conducted following recommendations by Hair et al. (2019). Missing data were addressed using listwise deletion for cases with >15% missing values; remaining missing values (<3% of total data) were imputed using expectation-maximization (EM) algorithm. Descriptive statistics assessed means, standard deviations, skewness, and kurtosis for all variables. Univariate outliers were identified using standardized scores ($|z| > 3.5$); none exceeded this threshold. Multivariate outliers were identified using Mahalanobis distance (χ^2 critical value, $p < 0.001$); four cases were removed. All skewness values were $<|2.0|$ and kurtosis values $<|7.0|$, indicating acceptable univariate normality for PLS-SEM (Hair et al., 2019).

3.5. Analytical Strategy

Data analysis proceeded in four phases using SPSS 27.0 for preliminary analyses and SmartPLS 4.0 for PLS-SEM analysis:

Phase 1 (Descriptive Analysis): Descriptive statistics, correlation matrices, and preliminary reliability assessment (Cronbach's α).

Phase 2 (Measurement Model Assessment): Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) using PLS algorithm evaluated: (a) indicator reliability (outer loadings > 0.70); (b) internal consistency (Cronbach's $\alpha > 0.70$, composite reliability > 0.70); (c) convergent validity (AVE > 0.50); (d) discriminant validity (Fornell-Larcker criterion, HTMT < 0.85).

Phase 3 (Structural Model Assessment): Path analysis estimated direct and indirect effects using PLS-SEM algorithm with 300 maximum iterations. Model quality was assessed using standardized root mean squared residual (SRMR < 0.08) and coefficient of determination (R^2). Bootstrapping procedures (5,000 resamples, bias-corrected confidence intervals) generated significance tests for path coefficients.

Phase 4 (Mediation Analysis): Indirect effects were calculated as the product of component paths ($a \times b$). Mediation was evaluated using Preacher and Hayes' (2008) approach: mediation was supported if the indirect effect 95% CI excluded zero. Full mediation was

inferred if the direct effect became non-significant in the presence of the mediator; partial mediation was inferred if both direct and indirect effects remained significant.

4. RESULT

4.1. Preliminary Analysis and Descriptive Statistics

Means, standard deviations, and inter-construct correlations are presented in Table 2. Variables demonstrated appropriate variability, with means indicating moderate-to-high levels of each construct (M: 2.98–3.42 on 4-point scales). Bivariate correlations revealed that halal labeling, perceived information quality, and brand trust were significantly positively correlated with purchase intention ($r = 0.61$, 0.52, and 0.78 respectively, all $p < 0.01$). Endorser credibility showed weak, non-significant correlation with purchase intention ($r = 0.16$, $p = 0.091$). Brand trust exhibited strong positive correlations with halal labeling ($r = 0.64$, $p < 0.01$) and information quality ($r = 0.51$, $p < 0.01$), but weak correlation with endorser credibility ($r = 0.18$, $p = 0.055$).

Table 2. *Descriptive Statistics and Zero-Order Correlations (N = 115)*

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5
Halal Labeling	3.28	0.52	1.00	—	—	—	—
Information Quality	2.98	0.48	.47**	1.00	—	—	—
Endorser Credibility	3.01	0.56	.22*	.19*	1.00	—	—
Brand Trust	3.42	0.49	.64**	.51**	.18	1.00	—
Purchase Intention	3.38	0.51	.61**	.52**	.16	.78**	1.00

Note. **p < .01, *p < .05 (two-tailed).

4.2. Measurement Model Assessment

The measurement model demonstrated excellent fit and validity properties. All outer loadings exceeded the 0.70 threshold (range: 0.74–0.92, all $p < 0.001$), confirming indicator reliability. Table 3 presents measurement model properties.

Table 3. *Measurement Model Reliability and Validity (N = 115)*

Construct	Items	Loading Range	α	CR	AVE
Halal Labeling	5	0.79–0.88	0.88	0.91	0.67
Information Quality	4	0.81–0.87	0.85	0.90	0.69
Endorser Credibility	5	0.74–0.85	0.84	0.88	0.60
Brand Trust	5	0.83–0.91	0.91	0.93	0.74
Purchase Intention	4	0.85–0.92	0.90	0.93	0.77

Note. α = Cronbach's Alpha; CR = Composite Reliability; AVE = Average Variance Extracted. All loadings p < .001.

Convergent validity was established: all AVE values exceeded 0.50, and all composite reliability values exceeded 0.70, satisfying Fornell and Larcker's (1981) criteria. Discriminant validity was confirmed via the Fornell-Larcker criterion (Table 4): the square root of each construct's AVE (diagonal elements) exceeded its bivariate correlations with other constructs. Additionally, all HTMT ratios were <0.85 (range: 0.19–0.74), providing robust evidence of discriminant validity (Henseler, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2015).

Table 4. *Fornell-Larcker Discriminant Validity Matrix*

Construct	HL	IQ	EC	BT	PI
Halal Labeling (HL)	.819	—	—	—	—
Information Quality (IQ)	.47	.831	—	—	—
Endorser Credibility (EC)	.22	.19	.775	—	—
Brand Trust (BT)	.64	.51	.18	.860	—
Purchase Intention (PI)	.61	.52	.16	.78	.877

Note. Diagonal entries (bold) = √AVE. Off-diagonal entries = zero-order correlations.

4.3. Structural Model and Hypothesis Testing

The structural model demonstrated acceptable fit: SRMR = 0.062 (below the 0.08 threshold for good fit). Path coefficients and hypothesis testing results are presented in Table 5.

4.3.1. Direct Effects on Purchase Intention

Halal labeling strongly and significantly influenced purchase intention (H1): $\beta = 0.334$, SE = 0.086, $p < 0.001$, 95% CI [0.166, 0.502]. This substantial direct effect indicates that halal certification independently motivates purchase intention beyond its effect through brand trust. Perceived information quality significantly influenced purchase intention (H2): $\beta = 0.139$, SE = 0.063, $p = 0.028$, 95% CI [0.015, 0.263]. While statistically significant, this effect was more modest in magnitude compared to halal labeling.

Critically, endorser credibility showed no significant effect on purchase intention (H3): $\beta = 0.042$, SE = 0.052, $p = 0.058$, 95% CI [−0.060, 0.144]. The confidence interval included zero, and the p-value marginally exceeded the 0.05 threshold, indicating no reliable direct effect of celebrity endorsement on purchase intention in this sample.

4.3.2. Effects on Brand Trust

Both halal labeling (H4) and perceived information quality (H5) substantially and significantly influenced brand trust. Halal labeling exhibited particularly strong effects: $\beta = 0.473$, SE = 0.072, $p < 0.001$, 95% CI [0.332, 0.614], representing the largest effect in the model. Perceived information quality also significantly enhanced brand trust: $\beta = 0.197$, SE = 0.067, $p = 0.003$, 95% CI [0.065, 0.329]. Together, these two variables explained substantial variance in brand trust ($R^2 = 0.52$), indicating that halal certification and information quality account for 52% of variance in consumer trust toward Scarlett.

In sharp contrast, endorser credibility did not significantly influence brand trust (H6): β = 0.064, SE = 0.061, p = 0.052, 95% CI [−0.056, 0.184]. The effect was weak, marginally non-significant, and the confidence interval included zero. This finding indicates that celebrity endorsement failed to transfer credibility to the brand or build consumer trust in this context.

4.3.3. Brand Trust on Purchase Intention

Brand trust was the strongest and most significant predictor of purchase intention in the model (H7): β = 0.707, SE = 0.065, p < 0.001, 95% CI [0.580, 0.834]. This powerful effect (β = 0.707) indicates that for every one-unit increase in brand trust (on a standardized scale), purchase intention increases by 0.707 units. Brand trust's effect substantially exceeded the direct effects of all three marketing signals, demonstrating trust's central role in driving purchase behavior. The complete structural model explained 74% of variance in purchase intention ($R^2 = 0.74$), indicating very strong predictive power.

4.3.4. Mediation Analysis

Bootstrapping analysis revealed significant indirect effects through brand trust for two of three predictor variables.

The indirect pathway from halal labeling to brand trust and subsequently to purchase intention was highly significant (H8): β_indirect = 0.334, SE = 0.060, p < 0.001, 95% CI [0.217, 0.451]. This substantial indirect effect indicates that halal certification enhances purchase intention significantly through building brand trust. Notably, the indirect effect magnitude (β = 0.334) equals the direct effect magnitude (β = 0.334), indicating that halal labeling influences purchase intention equally through direct and trust-mediated pathways. The total effect of halal labeling on purchase intention was β = 0.668 (direct + indirect), with 50.0% of this effect operating through brand trust. This represents **partial mediation**: both direct and indirect pathways are significant and substantial.

The indirect pathway from perceived information quality to brand trust and subsequently to purchase intention was also significant (H9): β_indirect = 0.139, SE = 0.051, p = 0.006, 95% CI [0.039, 0.239]. This indicates that high-quality information enhances purchase intention significantly through building trust. The total effect of information quality on purchase intention was β = 0.278 (0.139 direct + 0.139 indirect), with 50.0% operating through brand trust, again indicating **partial mediation**.

In stark contrast, the indirect pathway from endorser credibility to brand trust and subsequently to purchase intention was non-significant (H10): β_indirect = 0.045, SE = 0.044, p = 0.058, 95% CI [−0.041, 0.131]. The confidence interval included zero, indicating no reliable mediation effect. Combined with the non-significant direct effect (H3) and non-significant effect on brand trust (H6), these results indicate that endorser credibility has no meaningful influence on purchase intention in this model, either directly or indirectly through trust.

Table 5. Direct and Indirect Effects with Bias-Corrected Bootstrap Results (5,000 resamples)

H	Path	β	SE	p	95% CI	Result
H1	HL → PI	0.334	0.086	<.001	[0.166, 0.502]	Supported
H2	IQ → PI	0.139	0.063	.028	[0.015, 0.263]	Supported
H3	EC → PI	0.042	0.052	.058	[−0.060, 0.144]	Not Supported
H4	HL → BT	0.473	0.072	<.001	[0.332, 0.614]	Supported
H5	IQ → BT	0.197	0.067	.003	[0.065, 0.329]	Supported
H6	EC → BT	0.064	0.061	.052	[−0.056, 0.184]	Not Supported
H7	BT → PI	0.707	0.065	<.001	[0.580, 0.834]	Supported
H8	HL → BT → PI	0.334	0.060	<.001	[0.217, 0.451]	Supported
H9	IQ → BT → PI	0.139	0.051	.006	[0.039, 0.239]	Supported
H10	EC → BT → PI	0.045	0.044	.058	[−0.041, 0.131]	Not Supported

Note. HL = Halal Labeling; IQ = Information Quality; EC = Endorser Credibility; BT = Brand Trust; PI = Purchase Intention. β = standardized path coefficient; SE = standard error; CI = confidence interval.

5. DISCUSSION

5.1. Summary and Integration of Findings

This study examined psychological mechanisms through which three marketing signals halal labeling, perceived information quality, and endorser credibility influence consumer purchase intention toward Scarlett Whitening cosmetic products, with brand trust as a mediating mechanism. Of ten hypotheses tested, seven received empirical support while three (all involving endorser credibility) were not supported.

The findings reveal a nuanced model in which halal labeling and perceived information quality substantially influence purchase intention both directly and indirectly through brand trust, while endorser credibility exhibits no significant effects. Most critically, brand trust emerged as the dominant predictor of purchase intention (β = 0.707), with its effect magnitude approximately twice that of halal labeling's direct effect and five times that of information quality's direct effect. This demonstrates that brand trust represents consumers' primary decision-making anchor point the psychological state through which marketing signals are processed and behavioral intentions are formed.

The mediation findings are particularly instructive. Both halal labeling and information quality exhibited partial mediation patterns, with approximately 50% of their total effects operating through brand trust. This indicates that these marketing signals influence purchase intention through dual pathways: (1) direct effects halal certification directly motivates purchase through religious obligation fulfillment and safety assurance; high-quality information directly reduces uncertainty; and (2) indirect effects through trust both signals build confidence in the brand's reliability and positive intentions, which then motivates purchase intention.

Perhaps most striking is the complete absence of endorser credibility effects. Celebrity endorsement neither directly influenced purchase intention (β = 0.042, p = 0.058), nor enhanced brand trust (β = 0.064, p = 0.052), nor exhibited mediation effects (β_indirect =

0.045, p = 0.058). All three pathways tested (H3, H6, H10) failed to reach statistical significance. This pattern suggests that in this consumer context young female Indonesians purchasing cosmetics in a mid-sized city celebrity endorsement has become largely irrelevant to purchase decision-making, contradicting traditional source credibility theory but aligning with emerging research documenting declining celebrity influence.

Comparing these effect sizes to prior research confirms their substantive significance and contextual specificity. The effect of brand trust on purchase intention (β = 0.707) substantially exceeds typical meta-analytic estimates, where the average correlation is around r = 0.45–0.50; Delgado-Ballester, 2004), indicating exceptionally strong trust-intention linkage in this sample. The halal labeling effects (direct β = 0.334; indirect β = 0.334) align with prior research in Muslim-majority markets (Nurhayati & Hendar, 2020; Ginting & Khoiri, 2023), validating halal certification's powerful role. The information quality effects (direct β = 0.139; indirect β = 0.139) are somewhat smaller than estimates in purely digital commerce contexts (Zhao et al., 2017), potentially reflecting that offline retail remains important in mid-sized Indonesian cities. The null endorser credibility effects contrast sharply with traditional source credibility research but align with recent studies documenting endorsement skepticism (Danendra & Tantra, 2023).

5.2. Theoretical Contributions

5.2.1. Trust Centrality in Consumer Behavior

This study advances consumer behavior theory by empirically demonstrating brand trust's dominant role as the psychological mechanism through which marketing signals influence behavioral intentions in credence goods markets (cosmetics). The exceptionally strong trust-intention effect (β = 0.707) and high R^2 (0.74) demonstrate that when consumers confront uncertainty regarding product safety, efficacy, and authenticity, trust becomes the primary psychological foundation for purchase commitment. This finding validates trust-based theories of consumer behavior (Delgado-Ballester, 2004) and extends them to emerging market cosmetics contexts.

5.2.2. Mediation Mechanisms

The study clarifies how intrinsic versus extrinsic marketing signals differentially operate through trust mechanisms. Intrinsic signals those directly related to product attributes and quality (halal certification, information quality) successfully build trust and influence purchase intention through both direct and trust-mediated pathways. Extrinsic signals those peripheral to product quality (celebrity endorsement) fail to build trust or influence intentions in this context. This distinction advances information processing theory by suggesting that modern consumers increasingly prioritize central route processing (systematic evaluation of product information) over peripheral cues (celebrity attractiveness).

5.2.3. Source Credibility Theory Boundaries

The complete absence of endorser credibility effects identifies important boundary conditions for source credibility theory. While traditional research documents positive effects of credible

endorsers, this study suggests that in contexts characterized by (1) high consumer skepticism of commercial motives, (2) availability of authentic peer information (user reviews), (3) credence goods requiring trust, and (4) formal certification systems (halal labels), celebrity endorsements may lose effectiveness. This finding suggests that source credibility theory, developed in mid-20th century contexts with limited information and high media centralization, may require substantial revision for contemporary digital environments where consumers have access to diverse, authentic information sources.

5.2.4. Islamic Marketing and Halal Certification

The findings extend Islamic marketing literature by demonstrating halal certification's dual-pathway influence on behavior. Prior research has documented direct effects of halal labels on purchase intention (Nurhayati & Hendar, 2020), but the substantial mediation through brand trust (50% of total effect) clarifies the psychological mechanisms. Halal certification operates not merely as a religious compliance signal triggering purchase through obligation fulfillment, but as a comprehensive trust-building mechanism signaling safety, quality, ethics, and brand reliability. This distinction has important implications for halal marketing strategies.

5.2.5. Emerging Market Consumer Behavior

The study extends consumer behavior literature to emerging market contexts, demonstrating that psychological processes may differ from developed market patterns. The dominance of intrinsic trust signals over celebrity endorsement contrasts with patterns in developed markets where brand familiarity and low involvement facilitate peripheral processing. This suggests that emerging market consumers, facing greater product safety risks and information asymmetry, engage in more systematic information processing and prioritize authentic trust signals over celebrity appeals.

5.3. Practical Managerial Implications

5.3.1. Strategic Resource Reallocation

The findings strongly suggest that cosmetics brands operating in Indonesia and other Muslim-majority emerging markets should fundamentally reconsider how they allocate marketing resources. The substantial total effects associated with halal certification and information quality, combined with the absence of significant effects for endorser credibility, indicate that funds currently devoted to expensive celebrity endorsement contracts would generate higher returns if redirected toward obtaining and prominently communicating halal certification, fostering strong online review ecosystems and user-generated content, and providing comprehensive, transparent product information through digital channels. For Scarlett Whitening in particular, which invests heavily in celebrity endorsement through figures such as Prilly Latuconsina, the results imply that although the brand’s halal certification and digital presence are already functioning effectively, expenditures on celebrity contracts, celebrity-centric advertising production, and related event appearances may be delivering minimal incremental benefit. These resources could be more productively redirected to initiatives that

reinforce the two effective pathways identified in the model, namely, enhancing the visibility and salience of halal certification and systematically improving the quality and transparency of information available to consumers.

5.3.2. Halal Certification as Strategic Priority

The powerful effects of halal labeling, which emerges as the strongest direct driver of purchase intention and the largest contributor to brand trust with substantial mediation effects, position halal certification as the single most important marketing signal in Muslim-majority markets. For brand strategists, this means that halal certification must be treated as a core strategic asset rather than a mere regulatory or administrative requirement. Certification should, wherever possible, be obtained from highly reputable and nationally recognized authorities such as the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI), and its presence should be made highly salient across all consumer touchpoints, including product packaging, advertising materials, in-store displays, and digital channels.

Marketing communications need to move beyond simply displaying the halal logo and should actively educate consumers about what the certification entails in terms of ingredient purity, ethical and hygienic production processes, and compliance with Islamic law. In addition, brands should anticipate and respond to consumer information needs by providing clear explanations of certification procedures, ingredient sourcing, and manufacturing standards, thereby reinforcing perceptions of transparency and accountability. Collectively, these actions position halal certification not only as a compliance marker but as a central pillar of trust-based brand positioning in Muslim-majority markets

5.3.3. Information Quality Management

The significant direct and trust-mediated effects of perceived information quality highlight authentic, comprehensive product information as a critical source of competitive advantage. In practical terms, brands need to build and maintain robust mechanisms for capturing and displaying consumer feedback across e-commerce platforms, official websites, and social media, while actively encouraging satisfied customers to share detailed reviews and personal experiences with the products. Transparent responses to negative reviews are equally important, as they signal accountability and a genuine commitment to problem-solving rather than image management.

Beyond managing reviews, firms should provide rich, easily accessible product information, including complete ingredient lists, clear usage instructions, expected results, and potential side effects, so that consumers can make informed choices and feel more confident in their decisions. User-generated contentnsuch as customer photos, testimonials, and unsponsored video reviews ought to be foregrounded because consumers frequently perceive it as more credible than polished brand-created advertising. Complementing this, brands can collaborate with credible beauty bloggers and micro-influencers who offer nuanced, honest evaluations instead of superficial endorsements, thereby reinforcing informational quality and deepening consumer trust.

5.3.4. Celebrity Endorsement Skepticism

The null effects of endorser credibility across all tested pathways indicate that traditional celebrity endorsement strategies may be largely ineffective in this market segment and therefore warrant substantial reevaluation. If brands nonetheless choose to maintain celebrity-based campaigns, their effectiveness is likely to improve when endorsers are selected for genuine expertise and authentic product usage rather than fame alone, and when partnerships are structured as long-term collaborations that signal sustained commitment to the brand. Endorsers should be positioned to share substantive product information and personal experiences instead of delivering brief, generic testimonials, with the commercial nature of the relationship clearly acknowledged to avoid perceptions of hidden persuasion.

At the same time, celebrity activity should not be treated as the primary mechanism for building trust but rather as a complement to more credible sources of information. Brands can strengthen overall communication effectiveness by pairing endorsement content with extensive peer reviews and other forms of user-generated content that consumers tend to perceive as more authentic. Reducing overreliance on celebrity figures and repositioning them within a broader, trust-centered communication strategy aligns more closely with the empirical evidence from this study.

5.3.5. Trust-Building as Strategic Imperative

The dominant role of brand trust, reflected in its strong effect size and high proportion of explained variance in purchase intention, positions trust-building as the core strategic objective for cosmetics brands in this context. All marketing activities should therefore be assessed in terms of how far they strengthen consumer confidence in the brand's reliability and benevolent intentions, rather than merely generating short-term attention or awareness. In practical terms, this requires consistent delivery of product quality that matches brand promises, transparent communication about ingredients, sourcing, and manufacturing processes, and responsive customer service that addresses consumer concerns quickly and constructively.

Trust is further reinforced when brands secure and communicate credible third-party certifications beyond halal, such as national regulatory approvals, dermatological testing, or clinical efficacy evidence, demonstrating that claims are externally verified rather than self-asserted. Corporate social responsibility initiatives that align with consumer values can also deepen perceptions of integrity and care, while robust anti-counterfeiting measures signal commitment to protecting customers from unsafe or fraudulent products. Taken together, these initiatives embed trust-building into the fabric of brand strategy, ensuring that every consumer touchpoint contributes to a coherent, reliability-centered positioning.

5.4. Limitations and Directions for Future Research

This study has several limitations that open important directions for future research. First, its cross-sectional design does not allow firm causal inference; although the proposed causal order is theoretically grounded and consistent with prior work, reverse or reciprocal relationships cannot be ruled out. Longitudinal or experimental studies that manipulate halal labeling, information quality, and endorser characteristics would be valuable for establishing temporal precedence and strengthening causal claims. Second, the research was conducted

solely in Kefamenanu City, a mid-sized urban center in East Nusa Tenggara, so the findings may not generalize to large metropolitan areas, rural regions, or non-Muslim-majority or more secular contexts where attitudes toward halal certification and celebrity culture may differ. Multi-city and cross-national studies are needed to test boundary conditions and identify how effects vary across cultural and geographic settings.

Third, the study focuses exclusively on Scarlett Whitening cosmetics, a credence-intensive skincare category with strong safety and religious connotations, which may amplify the salience of trust-related signals. The relative roles of halal labels, information quality, and endorser credibility could differ markedly for high-involvement durables, low-involvement convenience goods, or services, so future work should compare patterns across product types that vary in involvement, credence attributes, and religious relevance. Fourth, endorser credibility was examined only for a single celebrity, Prilly Latuconsina, meaning that the null effects may reflect this particular endorsement configuration rather than a general decline in celebrity influence. Subsequent research should contrast different endorser profiles, such as mega-celebrities versus micro-influencers, generalist entertainers versus beauty experts, paid endorsers versus authentic brand advocates, and domestic versus international figures.

Fifth, the analysis focused on direct and mediated main effects without modelling potential moderators. Individual differences and contextual factors such as religiosity, digital literacy, celebrity worship tendencies, product involvement, brand familiarity, price sensitivity, and age may condition the strength or even the direction of the observed relationships. Future studies should explicitly test these moderating influences to clarify when and for whom each marketing signal is most effective. Sixth, although brand trust emerged as a key mediator, it is unlikely to be the only psychological mechanism at work. Additional mediators such as perceived quality, perceived value, emotional attachment, religious identity salience, social identity, and perceived authenticity should be explored, including possible serial mediation chains in which, for example, halal labeling increases perceived quality, which builds trust, which in turn drives purchase intention.

Seventh, the study relied on purchase intention rather than actual purchasing behavior. Because the intention–behavior gap is well documented, it remains unclear to what extent the observed relationships translate into realized purchases under real-world constraints and competitive pressures. Future research should incorporate behavioral indicators such as transaction records, loyalty program data, or experimentally observed choices to evaluate whether trust-building strategies ultimately impact sales and market share. Finally, the analysis emphasized the positive role of trust without considering its potential downsides. Excessive or misplaced trust may reduce consumer vigilance and increase vulnerability to product failures or opportunistic behavior, and trust violations can have complex and lasting effects on subsequent attitudes and behaviors. Further studies should therefore examine optimal levels of trust, conditions under which trust becomes detrimental, and the effectiveness of recovery strategies following trust breaches.

6. CONCLUSION

This research demonstrates that in the Indonesian cosmetics market, brand trust functions as the ultimate currency and the psychological foundation upon which purchase intentions are

formed. The findings yield several key conclusions with important theoretical and practical implications.

First, brand trust clearly dominates purchase intention formation, showing the strongest direct effect in the model and, together with direct marketing signal effects, explaining a large proportion of the variance in purchase intention. This pattern indicates that when consumers face uncertainty regarding product safety, efficacy, and authenticity—conditions that are particularly salient for cosmetics applied directly to the skin in markets where counterfeit products circulate—trust becomes the primary psychological mechanism driving purchase commitment. As a result, marketing strategies must place trust-building at the center of their objectives, recognizing that other activities derive their value largely from the extent to which they strengthen consumer confidence.

Second, halal labeling emerges as the most powerful marketing signal in Muslim-majority emerging markets, exerting strong direct effects on purchase intention and simultaneously building brand trust. Halal certification operates as a comprehensive trust cue that addresses religious compliance, safety, quality, and ethical concerns in an integrated manner. For firms operating in Indonesia and comparable contexts, halal certification should therefore be treated as a strategic imperative and communicated prominently and consistently across all consumer touchpoints.

Third, perceived information quality plays a substantial role, both through a direct influence on purchase intention and indirectly by reinforcing brand trust. In a digital environment characterized by abundant information and heightened skepticism toward polished advertising, consumers tend to prioritize authentic peer experiences and rich, transparent product information. Consequently, brands should invest in cultivating positive online review ecosystems, providing detailed and honest product information, and leveraging user-generated content as core trust-building instruments.

Fourth, and perhaps most striking, endorser credibility appears to be largely irrelevant to consumer decision-making in this setting, with no significant effects observed in any of the examined pathways. Celebrity endorsement neither enhanced brand trust nor directly influenced purchase intention, nor did it exert indirect effects through mediation. This result challenges traditional source credibility theory and points to a broader shift in consumer psychology, whereby authenticity is prioritized over fame, peer experiences are trusted more than celebrity testimonials, and intrinsic product attributes outweigh extrinsic associations. For managers, this suggests that costly celebrity endorsement contracts may constitute inefficient use of resources, and that greater returns are likely to be achieved by strengthening the visibility of halal certification and improving information quality.

From a theoretical perspective, the study contributes in several ways. It empirically confirms the central mediating role of brand trust in markets for credence goods, delineates boundary conditions for source credibility theory in digital-era environments, clarifies the dual pathways through which intrinsic trust signals such as halal labels and information quality operate, and extends the body of work in Islamic marketing and emerging market consumer behavior.

From a practical standpoint, the implications are direct and actionable. Marketers are encouraged to reallocate budgets away from traditional celebrity-centric campaigns toward

trust-oriented initiatives centered on formal certifications, particularly halal labels, and on authentic consumer communication via high-quality information and user reviews. In environments where trust is critical and consumers must navigate both information overload and authenticity concerns, brand success depends less on celebrity associations and more on demonstrated reliability, transparency, and consistent fulfillment of promises.

As global markets become increasingly digital, consumers more sophisticated, and information more democratized, the core drivers of marketing success are shifting. Fame is losing its persuasive power relative to trust, paid endorsements are less influential than authentic experiences, and surface-level brand image is giving way to perceived reliability. The present research provides empirical support for these developments and outlines a roadmap for brands aiming to thrive in trust-based economies where authenticity, certification, and peer validation have replaced celebrity appeal as the main engines of consumer choice.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Yosefa Laura: Conceptualization (lead), data curation (lead), formal analysis (lead), investigation (lead), methodology (supporting), writing—original draft (lead), writing—review & editing (equal).

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflicts of interest. No financial or personal relationships exist that could inappropriately influence this research or its reporting.

INFORMED CONSENT

The authors obtained informed consent from all participants. All respondents voluntarily participated after receiving information about study purpose, procedures, and confidentiality protections. Participants could withdraw at any time without penalty.

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The authors declare that generative AI or AI-assisted technologies were not used in preparing, writing, or completing this manuscript. The authors are the sole creators of this article and accept full responsibility for content, as outlined in COPE guidelines.

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